

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-25 (Canceled)

26. (previously presented) A process for making a container from a polyester(s) polymer, comprising feeding polyester particles having a degree of crystallinity of at least 15% and an It.V. of at least 0.70 dL/g to an extrusion zone, melting the particles in the extrusion zone to form a molten polyester polymer composition, and forming a sheet or a molded part from extruded molten polyester polymer, wherein the polyester particles fed to the extrusion zone have an It.V. at their surface which is less than 0.25 dL/g higher than the It.V. at their center and are not solid state polymerized before introducing said particles into the extrusion zone.

27. (original) The process of claim 26, wherein the It.V. at the surface of the particles is less than 0.20 dL/g higher than the It.V. at the center of the particles.

28. (original) The process of claim 27, wherein the wherein the difference between the It.V. of the particles at their surface and their center is 0.10 dL/g or less.

29. (original) The process of claim 28, wherein the difference is 0.05 dL/g or less.

30. (original) The process of claim 26, wherein the molded part is a container preform.

31. (original) The process of claim 30, comprising stretch blow molding the preform into a beverage container.

32. (original) The process of claim 31, wherein the container has a volume of 3 liters or less.

33. (original) The process of claim 27, comprising drying the particles in a drying zone at temperature of at least 140°C before melting the particles in the extrusion zone.

34. (original) The process of claim 26, further comprising drying the particles before feeding the particles to the extrusion zone, wherein the particles are not solid state polymerized before drying.

35. (original) The process of claim 34, wherein the particles have an acetaldehyde level of 10 ppm or less prior to melting in the extrusion zone.

36. (original) The process of claim 26, wherein the polyester polymer particles comprise:

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(a) a carboxylic acid component comprising at least 90 mole% of the residues of terephthalic acid, or derivatives of terephthalic acid, or mixtures thereof, and

(b) a hydroxyl component comprising at least 90 mole% of the residues of ethylene glycol,

based on 100 mole percent of the carboxylic acid component residues and 100 mole percent hydroxyl component residues in the polyester polymer, and at least 75% of the polyester polymer is virgin polymer.

37. (original) The process of claim 36, wherein the polyester polymer particles comprises:

(a) a carboxylic acid component comprising at least 92 mole% of the residues of terephthalic acid, or derivatives of terephthalic acid, or mixtures thereof, and

(b) a hydroxyl component comprising at least 92 mole% of the residues of ethylene glycol,

based on 100 mole percent of the carboxylic acid component residues and 100 mole percent hydroxyl component residues in the polyester polymer.

38. (previously presented) The process of claim 36, wherein the degree of crystallinity is at least 25%.

39. (previously presented) The process of claim 38, wherein the degree of crystallinity is at least 35%.

40. (original) The process of claim 26, comprising a bulk of said particles having a volume of at least 1 cubic meter.

Claims 41 – 53 (canceled)

54. (previously presented) The process of claim 36, wherein the article formed from the polyester polymer composition in the extrusion zone is a preform.

55. (previously presented) The process of claim 54, wherein the preform is stretch blow molded into a beverage container.

56. (previously presented) The process of claim 36, wherein the particles have an acetaldehyde level of 10 ppm or less prior to melting in the extrusion zone.

57. (previously presented) The process of claim 56, wherein the difference between the I.V. of the particles at their surface and at their center is 0.05 dL/g or less.

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58. (previously presented) The process of claim 57, wherein the polyester particles introduced into the extrusion zone have a degree of crystallinity of at least 35 percent.

59. (previously presented) The process of claim 36, wherein polyester particles having a degree of crystallinity of at least 25 percent and an It.V. of at least 0.75 dL/g obtained without solid state polymerization and having an It.V. at their surface which is less than 0.20 dL/g higher than the It.V. at the center of the particles are fed to said extrusion zone, melted to form said polyester polymer composition, and formed into a bottle preform.

60. (previously presented) The process of claim 59, wherein the degree of crystallinity is at least 35 percent, the It.V. is at least 0.77 dL/g.

61. (previously presented) The process of claim 60, wherein the difference between the It.V. of the particles at their surface is less than 0.05 dL/g higher than the It.V. at their center.

Claims 62-94 (Canceled)

95. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are obtained from underwater pelletizers.

96. (new) The process of claim 95, wherein said particles fed to the extrusion zone have an acetaldehyde level of 10 ppm or less.

97. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein said particles fed to the extrusion zone comprise spherical particles.

98. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles contain phosphorus.

99. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are obtained by polycondensing in the presence of a catalyst comprising titanium.

100. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are obtained by polycondensing in the presence of a catalyst consisting essentially of titanium.

101. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are obtained by polycondensing in the presence of a catalyst comprising antimony.

102. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are obtained by polycondensing in the presence of a catalyst consisting essentially of antimony.

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103. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles contain a reheat rate enhancing aid.

104. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the reheat enhancing aid comprises elemental antimony, carbon black, graphite, or black iron oxide.

105. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles comprise strain crystallized polyester polymers.

106. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles are dried at a temperature of 140 °C or more prior to feeding the particles into the extrusion zone.

107. (new) The process of claim 106, wherein the particles are dried at a gas flow rate of 0.2 to 5 scfm per lb/hr.

108. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles contain a metal deactivator.

109. (new) The process of claim 26, comprising injection molding the molten polyester polymer to form a container suitable for heat set beverage bottles.

110. (new) The process of any one of claims 97-109, wherein the particles are obtained from underwater pelletizers.

111. (new) The process of any one of claim 95-96 and 98-109, wherein the particles are spherical.

112. (new) The process of any one of claim 95-104 and 106-109, wherein the particles comprise strain crystallized polyester polymers.

113. (new) The process of any one of claims 95-97 and 99-109, wherein the particles contain phosphorus.

114. (new) The process of any one of claim 95-109, wherein the particles fed to the extrusion zone have an acetaldehyde level of 2 ppm or less.

115. (new) The process of claim 26, wherein the particles have an It.V. of at least 0.80 dl/g.